ECE Highlights

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE No. 14 June 1992

NEW COOPERATIVE APPROACHES TO REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES DOMINATE THE COMMISSION'S FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

The forty-seventh session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, held from 7-15 April 1992, took place at a time when the ECE region has had to face new challenges calling for cooperative solutions. The past year had brought an important increase in the Commission's membership, which has risen from 34 to 40 with the admission of Estonia, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova and San-Marino.

The session, which marked the 45th anniversary of the Commission, was opened by the United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali who highlighted the key tasks facing the United Nations economic and social system and its regional commissions in finding solutions to the tremendous problems arising regionally and globally. The Secretary-General emphasized the new spirit of solidarity and common purpose, which gave a fresh momentum to the UN/ECE as an all-European forum with a transatlantic dimension, and paid tribute to the Commission for having carried out two reviews of its programme, priorities, structures and methods of work in a space of five years in order to adapt it to the changing realities of the region. He felt it was particularly significant that the Commission, in addition to clearly defining five priority areas where it had a comparative advantage, had decided that a major objective of its work should be assistance to countries in transition and their integration into the European and world economy.

Focus on changing conditions

In the plenary, delegations observed that the past year had been marked by varying developments in the different parts of Europe, including processes of disintegration in the East and integration in the West. Many delegations spoke of the difficult transition in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and the consequent creation of new independent States. The old east-west partition of Europe had been replaced by a pan-European approach to the new challenges in the region. The countries in central and eastern Europe had continued on their road towards parliamentary democracy and market economy. However, the euphoria of 1989 had given way to a growing realization that the process of economic and political transformation would be a long and arduous task. It was recognized that both bilateral and multilateral initiatives were needed to secure the success of the reforms and mitigate the hardships experienced by the countries in transition, and to promote their integration into the European and global economy. The UN/ECE's workshops which deal with the central problems of economies in transition such as the privatization of State enterprises, the promotion of sustainable industrial development and efficient energy use, statistics, transport systems and other sectors were highly appreciated. Equally significant for many delegations, were the integration processes taking place at the regional and sub-regional levels.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali (centre), *opens the Commission's forty-seventh session in the presence of the Chairman of the session, Ambassador Andrei A. Ozadovski* (right) *and Mr. Gerald Hinteregger, Executive Secretary of the UN/ECE* (left)

Future activities

Observations were made on how the ECE, after two fundamental restructuring processes, now had to consolidate its work. Delegations discussed the further implementation of decision O (45) adopted at the Commission's 45th session in 1990 and considered that it remained a solid foundation for the future work in the five priority areas, namely, environment, transport, statistics, trade facilitation and economic analysis, as well as activities designed to assist countries in transition to a market economy and issues relating to sustainable development. They called for further steps to implement the decision and to ensure that the necessary staff and financial resources be allocated to the priority areas.

Many delegations stressed that the Commission should collaborate and coordinate its activities closely with other European international organizations and institutions active in the region.

Adoption of decisions

At its closing session, the Commission adopted seven decisions: on the work of the Commission as a whole; adequate resources for priority sectors; on fundamental principles of official statistics in the ECE region, on work concerning economies in transition in central and eastern Europe; on environment and sustainable development; transport; and on cooperation in the Mediterranean. Ambassador William Rossier (Switzerland) was elected Chairman and Ambassador Bernard Miyet (France), Vice-Chairman of the Commission's forty-eighth session, to take place from 20 to 28 April 1993.

NEWS BRIEFS

UN/ECE High Level Meeting on Sustainable Development in the Chemical Industry

A high-level Meeting on Cooperation and Sustainable Development in the Chemical Industry was held under the auspices of the UN/ECE in Warsaw from 10-12 March 1992. This meeting, which constitutes a follow-up to the Bergen Conference and a substantive contribution to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), agreed on a number of conclusions addressed to ECE member governments, the chemical industry and international organizations. There was general agreement to vigorously pursue efforts to coordinate and harmonize legal standards; to promote chemical safety, cleaner production, classification of chemicals, control the transport of dangerous goods; and to prevent transboundary air pollution. The Government of Poland proposed that an International Environmental Management Centre be established and that a project be created dealing with the improvement of environmental performance of chemical production sites in economies in transition. In addition, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe was encouraged to examine, together with the chemical industry, a project on the recycling and use of recycled chemical material.

Integrated Statistical Information Systems and Related Matters (ISIS '92)

A seminar convened under the auspices of the Conference of European Statisticians was held in cooperation with the Federal Statistical Office and the Institute of Informatics and Statistics of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic in Bratislava from 18-22 May 1992. Participants at the seminar studied the methods and techniques connected with computerization of statistical information systems and exchanged national experiences in this field. Agenda items for discussion included topics such as common user interfaces to statistical databases, geographical information systems, techniques for archiving and disseminating large amounts of data and EDP applications for business registers. One important role of the meeting was to assist the National Statistical Offices of the central and east European countries in solving problems raised in statistical computing.

Working Party on Gas discusses attributes of vehicles using gaseous fuels

At a meeting of the Working Party on Gas held in January 1992, delegations discussed the outcome of the Symposium on the Use of Gaseous Fuels for Internal Combustion Engines, held in Kiev in September 1991. It was agreed that the Symposium, complemented by an "Auto-Tour", had demonstrated the importance and desirability of alternative transport fuels, such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and compressed natural gas (CNG) in order to alleviate air pollution. The recommendations of the Symposium will be widely disseminated and implemented in cooperation with other relevant organizations. One of the highlights of the meeting was the demonstration of two vehicles fuelled by CNG. These vehicles were displayed to show the commercial viability and environmental benefits of gaseous fuelled vehicles.

International standards agencies combine efforts to advance EDI standardization

Recognizing the risk of divergent approaches to standardization efforts for electronic data interchange (EDI), the executives of four international standardization agencies have recently agreed to work toward a coordinated programme. The Secretary-General of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE), the Director of the International Telegraph and Telephone Consultative Committee (CCITT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the General Secretary of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) have endorsed a new inter-agency coalition for EDI standardization and will seek similar commitments from other relevant regional bodies and industry groups. An inter-agency group of experts is being constituted to advance the EDI standardization planning work and to develop a strategy for future programmes.

JUST PUBLISHED

Recent Economic Developments in the ECE Region

According to the recently published UN/ECE *Economic Survey of Europe in 1991-1992*, 1991 was one of the worst years for the world economy since the end of the Second World War. Global output fell for the first time since 1945 and the growth of world trade declined for the third year in succession. In the market economies of western Europe and North America output growth was virtually zero, showing a small increase in Europe which was offset by a fall in North America. Current forecasts point to a marginal recovery in 1992.

In central and eastern Europe the depression associated with the break-up of centrally planned economies deepened further with domestic output levels falling by some 14 per cent. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the consequent creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States was one of the most momentous events of the post-war period. The *Survey* points out that it has proved fairly easy to break up the old structures but extremely difficult to build new ones. Fixed investment is still falling rapidly in the transition economies and the trend has to be reversed if the reform process is to succeed and the high unemployment levels to be checked. Fear is growing that the increasing economic strains will lead to deception and impatience, with both the market economy and the democratization process. Western governments will have to show much greater commitment for the reform process, if they want to prevent its failure.

This *Survey* for 1991-1992 offers an overview of recent developments and selected policy issues with special emphasis on the economies in transition. It reviews macro-economic developments in Western Europe, North America and in central and eastern Europe. The political disintegration and economic fragmentation of the former Soviet Union are discussed in sections focusing on the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine, as well as the Baltic States. The Survey reviews international support for eastern transformation, and presents a framework for analysis and a tentative assessment of prospects and policy choices in view of east-west migration. This year, the *Survey* contains a special chapter devoted to the important topic of privatization and property rights in the transition countries.

Economic Survey of Europe in 1991-1992. Sales No. E.92.II.E.1. Price: $US 80.00.

Workshops on Transition

A series of Workshops for Economies in Transition was started in 1990 to create a flexible instrument for problem analysis, exchange of experience and follow-up action. About 30 workshops were organized in 1991 and 50 are presently being implemented or under preparation for 1992/93.

The experience gained so far with this effective new instrument is reflected in a brochure, which is available free of charge from the UN/ECE Information Office. The brochure contains reports on workshops already held as well as a calendar of forthcoming events.

Legal Aspects of Privatization in Industry New UN/ECE Guide

A central challenge facing the countries of central and eastern Europe in transition towards market economies is the privatization of their enterprises. The aim of a new Guide published by the UN/ECE is to assist the countries in transition in establishing a suitable legal framework for privatization. It outlines the principal problems most likely to arise in the course of the privatization of their enterprises; the new laws and institutions; and the main methods that can be employed in the task of privatization. The Guide discusses the definition and aims of privatization and the industries and sectors concerned by that process; examines the major economic and legal problems which will need to be addressed; describes the legal preconditions of privatization and examines the basic methods and procedures of privatization. The legal texts of the principal privatization laws of Albania, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Russian Federation are published as an Annex to the Guide.

Legal Aspects of Privatization in Industry (ECE/TRADE/18). Sales No. E.92.II.E.2. Price: $US 50.00.

European Red List of Globally Threatened Animals and Plants

Some 60 mammals, 28 birds, 37 reptiles, 19 amphibians, 38 freshwater fishes, 238 invertebrates and about 4,500 vascular plants in Europe, whose survival on a global scale is threatened, are registered in the European Red List of Globally Threatened Animals and Plants which has been published by the UN/ECE. The list provides information on species conservation status according to the IUCN categories of threat and species distribution in individual European countries, with a reference to species occurrence outside Europe. The adoption of the European Red List is the collective response of UN/ECE Governments to the need to achieve the aim of conserving the common European heritage of wildlife, particularly globally threatened animal and plant species. The List provides guidance for the competent authorities in UN/ECE member countries on the formulation, adoption, and implementation of priorities in conservation policies and strategies, both at national and international levels.

European Red List of Globally Threatened Animals and Plants. Sales No. E.91.II.E.34. Price: $US 29.00.

OTHER SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

General

Economic Growth in the Market Economies 1950-2000 — Discussion Papers, Volume 1 (1991) No. 1. UN Sales No. GV.E.91.O.15. Price: $US 25.00.

Agriculture and Timber

Forest Products Market Review in 1990-1991 Timber Bulletin, vol. XLIV, No. 5.

Timber Bulletin, Volume XLIV, No. 9: Forest products statistics 1986, June 1991.

READEX FICHE

UN/ECE Standards for Dry and Dried Fruit (ECE/AGRI/116). UN Sales No. E.91.II.E.43. Price: $US 55.00.

Energy

World Coal Trade up to the Year 2010 (ENERGY/WP.1/GE.2/R.5 and Add.1).

Code of Uniform Standards and Procedures for the Performance of Draught Surveys of Coal Cargoes (ECE/ENERGY/19).

Environment and Human Settlements

Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution concerning the Control of Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds or their Transboundary fluxes (ECE/EB.AIR/30).

Industry and Technology

Annual Review of Engineering Industries and Automation 1990 Volumes I and II (ECE/ENG/AUT/47). UN Sales No. E.91.II.E.40. Price: $US 55.00.

Substitutes for Tripolyphosphate in Detergents (ECE/CHEM/80). UN Sales No. E.91.II.E.33. Price: $US 26.00.

Statistics

Statistics of Road Traffic Accidents in Europe 1992, Vol. XXXVII. Sales No. E/F/R.92.II.E.3. Price: $US 25.00.

WHERE TO ORDER

The publications listed with sales prices may be ordered from: **United Nations Bookshop, Sales Unit, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland** and a number of bookstores in the ECE region. Send cheque or money order in US dollars made payable to: UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS.

Those publications listed without a sales price may be obtained from the Information Officer, Economic Commission for Europe, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

Seventh Conference on Urban and Regional Research

29 June - 3 July 1992

Questions of ecologically oriented urban development and management are an increasing concern in urban planning today. It is often observed that ecological conditions in cities are worsening. Consequently, there are calls for better protection or restoration of the environment. The Seventh Conference on Urban and Regional Research, to be held in Ankara, Turkey, is dedicated to an assessment of the scale of this challenge and to the consideration of the role and contribution of research in urban ecology and its possible applications in the field of urban planning. The Conference is expected to assist policy-makers in their decision-making task and, at the same time, contribute to a better understanding of future research requirements in this area.

European Population Conference

The UN/ECE, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) will jointly organize a regional European Population Conference to be held from 23 to 26 March 1993 at Geneva. The intergovernmental Conference will examine the demographic changes in the countries of the UN/ECE region, discuss policy responses to those changes and propose recommendations on key population issues during the next decade. Its conclusions and recommendations will serve as the contribution of Europe and North America to the United Nations Conference on Population and Development to be held in 1994.

SELECTED EVENTS

1992

June

1-2	Electricity and Energy Efficiency: Technology and Demand Management. Eliaden, Oslo (Norway)
1-5	SENIOR ECONOMIC ADVISERS TO ECE GOVERNMENTS
15-19	CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS
29-1 July	Working Party on International Contract Practices in Industry

July

2-3	Working Party on Combined Transport
6-17	Sub-Committee of the ECOSOC Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (ECOSOC)
8-10	Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport

August

26-28	Meeting of Experts on Pollution and Energy

New Address for the Energy Efficiency 2000 Project secretariat

The secretariat of the Energy Efficiency 2000 Project has moved to new offices at the International Trade Centre, Geneva, as of 1 January 1992. It can be contacted at the following address:

Energy Efficiency 2000 Project, International Trade Centre, 54-56, rue de Montbrillant, CH-1202 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Tel.(41 22) 734 33 00 or 730 05 90

Fax.(41 22) 734 32 85

For further information, contact:
The Information Officer,
Economic Commission for Europe,
Palais des Nations,
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Telephone: (022) 734 60 11
Ext. 2893 or 2684
Telex: 41 29 62
Telefax: (22) 734 98 25

ECE Highlights provides a round-up of news and information on major ECE events and publications and is available free of charge from the Information Officer.

Printed at United Nations, Geneva—GE.92-21354—May 1992—3,000—ISSN 1014-3866